

## Natural Resources Conservation Service, USDA

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### Subpart A—General

#### § 654.1 Purpose and scope.

(a) This part sets forth the operation and maintenance requirements pertaining to measures installed with Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) assistance. This includes measures installed under the following programs:

(1) Federal financially-assisted projects.

(i) Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention (WP&FP). See part 622 of this title.

(ii) Flood Prevention (FP). See part 623 of this title.

(iii) Specifically authorized projects.

(iv) Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D).

(2) Conservation Operations (CO).

(3) Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP). See part 624 of this title.

(4) Great Plains Conservation Program (GP). See part 631 of this title.

(b) These regulations shall apply to all Federal financially-assisted projects as set forth in subpart B for the duration of their respective operation and maintenance agreements. However, this does not relieve the sponsor(s) of any liability which may continue beyond the evaluated life of the measure under Federal, State, and local laws. Operation and maintenance agreements in effect prior to the effective date of these regulations are not affected by these regulations.

#### § 654.2 Definitions.

*Evaluated life.* The time period for which project or measure benefits and costs have been evaluated. The evaluated life starts after the last project measure of the evaluation unit has been completed.

*Landuser.* Those who individually or collectively use land as owner, lessee, occupier, or by other arrangements which give them conservation planning or implementation concern and responsibility for the land involved.

*Maintenance.* The work and actions required to keep works of improvement in a condition to function for their intended purpose and the replacement of portions of project measures as specified in the O&M agreement.

*Operation.* The administration, management, and performance of services needed to insure the continued proper functioning of completed project measures.

*Operation and maintenance agreement.* A written agreement between the sponsor(s) and NRCS or other recipient(s) in which responsibilities and actions are established for the operation, maintenance, replacement, and inspection of project measures.

*Plan of operation and maintenance.* A detailed program of action to provide for performing the operation and maintenance of a specific project measure.

*Project measures.* An undertaking for watershed protection; flood prevention; the conservation, development, utilization, and disposal of water; the conservation and proper utilization of land; or a combination thereof. The undertaking may consist of vegetative, structural, or management measures or a combination thereof. Vegetative measures are those measures involving only seedbed preparation and/or the planting of vegetative material.

*Public recreation and/or fish and wildlife facility.* A project measure or part thereof which (a) creates or improves the potential for public recreational use and enjoyment, or (b) materially contributes to the preservation, production, or harvest of fish and wildlife.

*Sponsor.* An agency or organization with authority to provide local responsibility for a Federal financially-assisted local project under a program administered by NRCS.

*State Conservationist.* The NRCS officer responsible for NRCS activities within a particular State, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, or the U.S. Virgin Islands.

*Structural measures.* Structural measures are those measures that are excavated or constructed with concrete, earth, masonry, metal, rock, or other materials, and associated vegetation.

## Subpart B—Federal Financially-Assisted Projects

### § 654.10 Operation and maintenance agreement.

A duly authorized official of the sponsor(s) must execute an O&M agreement with NRCS prior to NRCS furnishing financial assistance.

### § 654.11 Sponsor(s)' responsibility.

(a) On non-Federal land, sponsor(s) are responsible for financing and performing without cost to the Federal Government, needed operation and maintenance (O&M) of project measures installed with Federal financial assistance.

(b) The Federal agency administering Federal land involving project measures is responsible either for performing or requiring the performance of O&M on land administered by that agency. If project measures benefit

both Federal and non-Federal land or interests, the O&M may be performed by the Federal agency, the sponsor(s), or both as mutually agreed by the Federal agency, sponsor(s), and NRCS. If O&M of project measures is performed by mutual agreement, the cost of O&M may be shared by the Federal agency and sponsor(s) as agreed.

(c) The sponsor(s) shall obtain NRCS approval before modifying a project measure of changing land use to fulfill a different purpose.

### § 654.12 Financing operations and maintenance.

Sources of funds needed to operate and maintain project measures for the duration of the O&M agreement shall be identified in the watershed or RC&D measure plan.

### § 654.13 Designating responsibility for operation and maintenance.

Those organizations or agencies responsible for the O&M of each project measure shall be identified in the watershed or RC&D measure plan.

### § 654.14 Duration of sponsor(s)' responsibility.

(a) Sponsor(s)' responsibility for O&M of a completed project measure begins when a part of all of the contract installing such measure is completed and accepted from the contractor. If the installation of the project measure is performed by force account, division of work, or performance of work methods, the sponsor(s)' O&M responsibilities begin on the date the work or portion thereof is completed as determined by NRCS, except for completed work located on Federal lands which are subject to special-use permits. The O&M agreement shall specify that O&M will continue through: (1) The evaluated life of the project, or (2) the evaluated life of measures that are economically evaluated as a unit, or (3) the useful life of cost-shared measures that are for land conservation or land utilization. The sponsor(s)' duties and liabilities for the measures under other Federal and State laws are not affected by the expiration of the O&M agreement.

(b) For project measures being installed in segments, the sponsor(s)